



March 14, 2011

Judiciary Committee
LOB Room 2500
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairman Eric Coleman, Chairman Gerald Fox, Ranking Member John Kissel, Ranking Member John Hetherington and other distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am a psychiatrist, a physician and a public servant who has worked to reduce substance abuse for over thirty years. I was the first Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the nation's principal agency devoted to scientific research on drugs of abuse, including marijuana. I also served as America's second "White House Drug Czar" under Presidents Nixon and Ford. I am currently the President of the Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc. (IBH), a non-profit organization devoted to reducing illegal drug use, and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown Medical School.

The testimony I submit today is to warn you about the danger of accepting smoked marijuana as medicine through *SB 1015 – An Act Concerning the Palliative Use of Marijuana*.

"Medical marijuana" is neither good public health policy nor compassionate healthcare for the sick. Marijuana is a Schedule I drug of abuse. It is not "medicine." Sound medical practice requires that medicines meet a variety of well-established standards to determine that they are safe and effective before they are approved for sick patients. This system includes the requirement that medicines be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Smoked marijuana fails to meet these commonly accepted standards for many reasons:

- **Smoked marijuana cannot be prescribed in controllable doses** because it delivers an inconsistent amount of the active ingredient, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). THC concentrations can vary from 2% to 30%.
- **Smoke is not a safe, healthy or reliable way to deliver a medicine.** No medicines in use today anywhere in the world are delivered by the smoke of burning leaves.
- **Marijuana contains toxic chemicals.** Just as with tobacco, smokers inhale over 2,000 different chemicals, many of them known to be harmful.
- **Marijuana depresses the immune system.** Prescribing something that threatens the immune system to someone who is already gravely ill (AIDS patients, cancer patients,

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etc.) is utterly contrary to the fundamental role of medical practitioners. It is also contrary to the Hippocratic Oath that medical doctors "do no harm" to their patients.

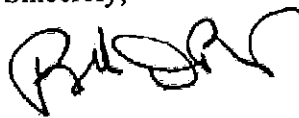
- **Smoked marijuana is not needed for any of the illnesses commonly cited by proponents.** Studies show that marijuana does not provide more effective relief than widely available and safer alternatives. Moreover, when patients were given smoked marijuana in research studies, most preferred to avoid marijuana because they did not like the side-effects.
- **Marijuana is inferior to newer, more refined medicines that have been developed since the medical marijuana issue was advanced decades ago.**

The debilitating medical conditions for which "medical marijuana" is used that are backed by scientific evidence are few in number and can be managed by the use of the Schedule III drug dronabinol (Marinol). This synthetic drug has the advantages of being orally administered, longer acting, less likely to produce intoxication, and provides standardized dosing.

Connecticut must not circumvent the important role of the FDA to study and approve medicines as safe for use. Medicines must not be approved by ballot initiative or legislative action and must be provided to patients in closed systems that reduce abuse and misuse. State legislators and residents have been fed claims of marijuana's unfounded health benefits. The truth is marijuana should not be used for any medical purpose. Some of the chemicals in marijuana may one day be approved for the treatment of specific disorders at specific doses within the well-established system of drug approval. They could then be dispensed by physicians in the controlled system that has served this country well for a century. Undermining that system is bad public policy, bad medicine and bad politics.

More people need to see "medical marijuana" for what it is: a cynical fraud and a cruel hoax. The conflict being discussed at this hearing today, in my view, is not about medicine; it is about the political exploitation of the public's compassion for suffering sick people. Legitimizing smoked marijuana as a "medicine" is a serious threat to the health and safety of all Americans.

Sincerely,



Robert L. DuPont, M.D.
President

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